



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About... *Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens*

What are bloodborne pathogens?

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that may be present in blood and cause disease, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Exposures occur through needle sticks or cuts from other sharp instruments contaminated with an infected person's blood or through contact in your eye, nose, mouth, or skin with infected blood. The viruses that cause these diseases are not transmitted through intact skin.

Who is at risk for exposure?

Factors affecting the risk of contracting a bloodborne pathogen disease include:

- The exposed blood must have one of the diseases
- Type of exposure
- Amount of blood involved in the exposure
- Amount of disease organism in the blood at the time of exposure
- You must be susceptible to the disease
- Open sores or areas of your skin with rash

Health care personnel are at the greatest risk for exposure to bloodborne pathogens through needle sticks or cuts.

How should blood exposures be treated?

Immediately following an exposure to blood:

- Wash the affected area with soap and water
- Flush affected areas of the nose, mouth, or eyes with water or saline
- Do not squeeze or use bleach on the wound
- Contact your health care provider for follow up testing and possible treatment

Laboratories cannot test syringes or needles for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV viruses because there is not enough blood on the device to test. Contact your local health department regarding the safe disposal of these devices.

How are exposures prevented?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens standard, 29 CFR 1910.1030, requires each employer to establish an Exposure Control Plan designed to protect employees against occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Exposure control plans should include procedures for reporting exposures, evaluation of risk for infection, information about treatment, and testing of blood. Prompt reporting is crucial. This allows for immediate medical follow-up and prevention of spreading a bloodborne infection to others.

All information presented is intended for public use. For additional information about bloodborne pathogen exposure, please visit the following Web sites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/universal.html>

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